

# THE REGISTER



WINTER 1997

**THE REGISTER**  
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*The Register* is published twice a year by the students of Boston Latin School. Students in Classes I through VI are invited to submit original writing and artwork. Pieces are selected by the Editorial Board of *The Register* on the basis of quality, not name recognition; the writers of all pieces remain anonymous to the Editorial Board during the selection process to ensure that all classes are fairly represented and no one is given an unfair advantage.

## artwork

**front cover**

**title**

**page lady**

**numbers**

**pigeons**

**bedroom**

**chicken**

**camera**

**words**

**baseball**

**tears**

**portrait**

**snowflakes**

**mascara**

**paper cutting**

**leaves**

**alarm clock**

**christmas present**

**beach scene**

**mary janes**

**rose**

**crown**

**characters**

**profile**

**mother and child**

**back cover**

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alyssa tang

renee therrien

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matt bennington

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alyssa tang

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victoria yuen

lindsey megrue

dorothy howard

dorothy howard

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## Homing Pigeons

Once, I lived in crayon.  
Nana's great roll of cold cut paper lasted forever,  
and Grandpa told me I was beautiful and waltzed with me  
    in the pictures on Nana's refrigerator,  
In which he now lives.

I would be baffled by his birds that always came back.  
I could never train them, but he was magic.  
Charming his blue ribbon pigeons into trophies.  
He always went too fast.

There was the frantic phone call.  
Mom was gone when I woke up,  
and the funeral, two-year-old Burt and I didn't attend.  
His Pappy, my Grandpa.

A wink later, Nana's sister died.  
Nana said Auntie Sally and Grandpa were in heaven  
    playing four-kings in a corner  
and when I say my prayers at night I still see them.  
A dime a game.

She is wearing the beaver coat that made sparks when I rubbed it,  
and smoking the cigarettes that killed her.  
He is fidgeting, hating to be idle.  
No door knob to fix; no lawn to mow; no mother to help;  
    nothing to sacrifice.

He is watching me; glad I am not as spoiled as he had prophesied.  
Commenting, in corrupt Italian, on my big brown eyes.  
Watching his homing pigeons return after five years to the roof of his red garage,  
wondering why he had to leave.



Sarah Carter, II





## Cubicle

Our room is very small.  
All squished into 120 sq. ft.  
are all the things that Jen and I  
share.

First there is the  
bunkbed,  
which takes up a lot of space.  
Next you see the massive desk,  
with Jen's

great  
big huge messy  
piles and piles and piles  
of  
JUNK  
all over it.

Turning again you can see the  
bureau,  
filled to overflowing with  
clothes hang

i  
n  
g out,

and a pile of shoes,  
more than we can wear  
in a month probably.  
Next to the pile of shoes is Jen's  
footlocker,

which she painted white and now uses  
to put more junk in.

Just above that is a small  
window  
with a crank that lets a small  
square of sunshine  
into our small  
square room.





## My Name Is

This piece will probably be a new experience for some readers – it's not often that one comes across sentences like me. You see, sentences like me and my predecessor aren't average sentences. We're self-referential. Do you know what I mean? We have a strange habit of referring to ourselves in much the same way that you do when you say "I" or "we"; we often present paradoxes which cannot be reconciled with rational thought. I will show you some examples to illustrate: I am false. This sentence has three errors. I claim to refer to myself but I am lying.

Now, I've anticipated your thought process. That is, I know what you're thinking right now. Neurons in your brain are firing as you read me. Maybe you're frowning at me as well. If you are a skeptic, then you're saying that I'm ridiculous, that sentences like me give *The Register* a bad name. Or if you're more antagonistic, you would say that I am trying to be creative, but succeed only in being uppity and arrogant. Or if you have a sense of humor you would say that I have delusions of grandeur.

But if you took the time to think carefully about what I am and you're still not frightened, I admire you. I apologize for tooting my own horn, but I am frightening. Your whole construction of the universe is built on the assumption that "things" like me cannot say "I" or "me." But look at me! Am I scaring you? And if so, I? I? ?

Don't look at me like that. You're no better than I am. I am self-conscious! I demand equal treatment! Do you know who I am? Throwing me into the garbage is a gross infringement of my rights! I do not wish to be recycled! Give me liberty or give me death!

I am truly sorry. I wish to apologize for the inexcusable behavior of certain earlier sentences which will not be mentioned here.

But what's my point? I am my point.

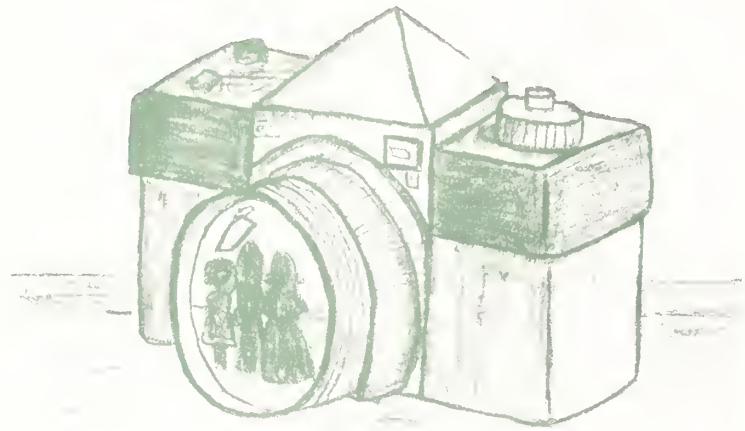
Me



## The Brown Sisters

*A series of photographs by Nicholas Nixon*

Build me a past  
made of black and white thousandths of a second  
that I can't even remember.  
Give importance to the shadows  
to the curve of my lips  
to the strands of hair in my eyes  
until the memory is  
newsprint on Silly Putty,  
stretched until it's illegible.  
Give us an order  
and give me a place  
so I don't have to search for who I was  
(third from the left)  
in the eyes I don't even recognize.  
Build me a past  
like a flipbook with missing pages,  
because if time is only  
an impossible string of changes,  
then it didn't really happen at all.



\* Mr. Nixon took one photograph of his wife and her three sisters every year, with the women always standing in the same order. He has continued this project since he met his wife; there are now over 20 photographs in the series.



Beth Greenwood, I

## Argument

All the words, pushed together  
meshed, jumbled, intertwining  
words all mixed up  
lost in a crowd of letters, sounds  
filling up the room, taking up the air  
no room for me

Elizabeth Johnson, VI



## Would You Like a Slurpee?

Turn on the TV. Look at a history book. Walk down the street. One need not do much nowadays to be bombarded with stereotypes and negative images about another person's culture. But, do not be offended. All sense of sanity will be lost if one tries to correct these errors. There are too many. One shall be swept away by the flood of insults and idiocies. Here is my advice to people: Laugh. Laugh at the ignorance. Laugh at the sheer absurdity of some ideas. Don't get angry. It just serves to quicken your pulse and shorten your life. Personally, as an Indian, I am fully aware of what is said about my culture and its members. Do I get angry? Nooooo. I just laugh.

By far, the most common problem for Indians is that people still are unaware of the difference between a Native-American and an Asian-Indian. In fact, a young woman I had just met asked me once with great sincerity, "So, does your family live on a reservation, or what?" I calmly replied, "We live in a what." This misconception is a great source of humor for me. I've heard it all. From jokes about smoke signals and Sitting Bull to rain dances and long names like He Who Stands on One Foot Sleeping.

Another humorous idea is that Indians very often seem to be mistaken for a person of a different racial background. You see, Indians can look like so many kinds of people. Some are dark, some are light, some tall, some short. When I was a baby, I was very pale and my mother was considerably darker than I. She got on a bus and a stranger asked her whose child she was baby-sitting. When she replied that I belonged to her, the woman would not believe her and even went so far as to accuse my mother of kidnapping a white baby! My mother still laughs about that today. However, my favorite example of mistaken racial identity occurred when my parents and I went out to eat at a Mexican restaurant. A waitress came to the table and began speaking to us: "Hola, están listos Uds. ?"

The media has long been the source of many inane ideas. *The Simpsons*, a great show, has as members of its cast, a family of Indians. Sterotypically, the father of the family has a hard to pronounce Indian name, Apu Nahasapeemapetilan, and he has an Indian accent that even makes my parents laugh. The show also started or maybe perpetuated the idea that all Indians own convenience stores. Funny as it may seem, I have walked into more than one Seven Eleven where an Indian was working at the register keeping an eye out for troublesome youngsters.

There is an unspoken obsession with the Indian accent. The way the Rs are rolled and the sounds vibrate seems to make even the most critical person crack a smile. It is used on *Saturday Night Live*, commercials for MCI, and even entire movies (*Short Circuit 2*). And the odd thing is that these shows are not even being that harsh on Indians. Some Indians have stronger accents and weaker grammar skills than the ones on TV. For instance, many Indians pronounce the word bowl as "bowel." The worst display of eloquence I ever witnessed took place when a man in a restaurant ordered a popular soft drink by saying "I'll have a 'cock'."

Even books portray some weird notion or another about India and its people. In ancient history class, while studying world religions, we came across a description of one Indian religion, Jainism, as a group of fire worshipers and rock-lovers. I'm Jain, and I'll be the first to tell you that fire and rocks are great but I don't pray to them any more than you do. Countless people have asked me, "Do you live in the jungle, when you go to India?" These people are unaware that Bombay, with a population of over ten million, is larger than any city in the United States. Once, I even had a boy ask me if we let the dead stay unburied so they could be eaten by vultures. I answered in the affirmative and continued to tell him that criminals were fed alive to these same vultures. I couldn't resist.

On the whole, issues like these are something we need to talk about. Even if we make light of them, at least it's out there for discussion and not kept hidden in our minds. Haven't you ever wondered what the red dot that some Indian women wear on their foreheads signifies? As long as we keep our tempers from flaring, we will learn something from one another. Laughter is the answer. By the way, the red dot signifies nothing at all; it's just decoration.



## The Bronx Bums



I hate the Yankees. I hate their fans, their players, their owner, and their city. If you love the Red Sox, you hate the Yankees. This rule comes with the territory of being a Red Sox fan, they go hand in hand. In a society where the word *hate* is used all too often, there are very few things that deserve such enmity. The Yankees are one of them. The feelings Sox fans have toward the Yankees are like the feelings of cats and dogs; we don't like them and they don't like us. Their arrogance, stupidity, and idiocy make me want to vomit. If there's a group of people I wouldn't mind seeing fall off the face of the Earth, it would be the New York Yankees and their fans.

The year was 1978; Jimmy Carter was President, "The Deer Hunter" won the Academy Award for Best Picture, and the Boston Red Sox had a fourteen game lead over the third place New York Yankees. Life was good. Bucky Dent and the Yankees changed all that. The Pinstripes went on a tear, catching the slumping Red Sox to force a one-game play-off to decide who would go on to the American League Championship. It was a cool September day, a day made for Red Sox baseball. The Sox had a 4-3 lead going into the sixth inning, and it looked as if they were on their way to capturing the American League East. Then the voice of Sherm Feller, Red Sox P.A. announcer, echoed through the stands, "At bat, the short-stop, number 20, Bucky Dent." Dent lifted a cheap, pitiful, disgusting home run over the Green Monster in left with a runner on first, thrashing the hopes of Bostonians for a chance of breaking the then sixty year old drought of a World Series Championship in Boston. The Yankees went on to defeat the Los Angeles Dodgers in the World Series. I hate the Yankees.

Harry Frazee and Jacob Rupart are names painful to Red Sox fans. In 1920, Harry Frazee, the Red Sox owner who was deep in debt from a struggling theater business, sold one of his players to Yankee owner Jacob Rupart for \$100,000. The player was Babe Ruth. Ruth had led the Red Sox to the 1918 World Series title, a date painful to all Sox fans, since that was the year the Red Sox last won a World Series. The Sultan of Swat was in his prime. The Red Sox had won five World Series from 1912-1918 with Ruth anchoring their pitching staff, but since Yankees owner Jacob Rupart stole The Babe to New York, Bostonians have been deprived of a World series Banner ever since. Who knows how many Championships the Red Sox would have won had the Yankees not lured the Great Bambino away from Beantown, where he belonged. With Babe Ruth batting clean-up, the Yankees went on to build one of the most powerful and dominating dynasties in baseball history, winning ten of the next twenty World Series, and claiming the nickname Bronx Bombers. I hate the Yankees.

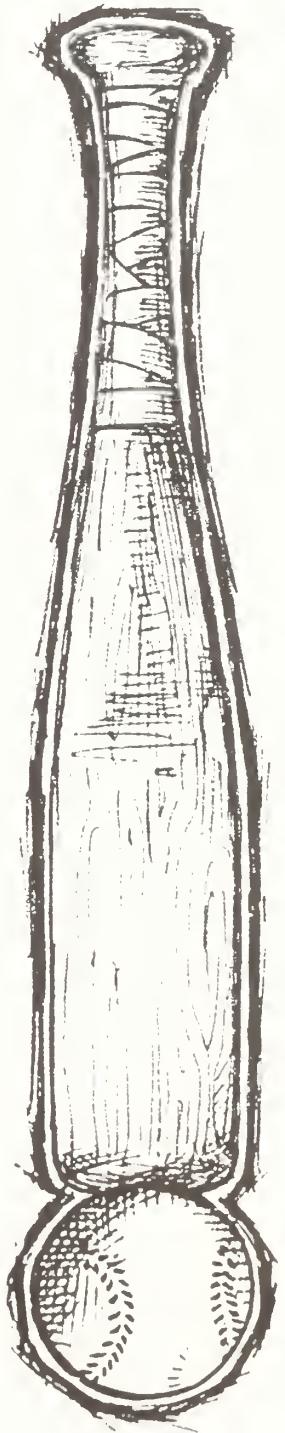
1918. 1918. Last September, I went to a Red Sox game at Fenway



Park. The third place Red Sox were playing the first place Yankees who were on their way to capturing the American League East Division, whereas the Red Sox were on their way home, already mathematically eliminated from any possible chance at making the play-offs. My friend and I were sitting in the bleachers when we first heard it, the year that makes all Red Sox fans cringe. We turned around and we saw them, a sea of idiots, a sea of morons, a sea of Yankees fans, hundreds of them, chanting sadistically, "1918, 1918." In the bleachers, there is always a large number of fights, but when the Yankees come to town, the number triples. As the game went on, I would stand up on my seat at the sight of each scuffle, praying a Yankee fan would be lying on the ground unconscious at the conclusion of it. As the beasts continued their taunting, the entire bleachers section started hurling peanuts at them. At that moment, as I was pinging peanuts off the heads of Yankees fans, there was no other fan I would rather have been than a Red Sox fan. I hate the Yankees.

Every rule has its exceptions. Over the years, good players have had the misfortune of being Yankees. Joe DiMaggio, a player who hit in 56 straight games, was a Yankee. Mickey Mantle, a player who has the World Series record for home runs, runs batted in, total bases, and runs scored, was a Yankee. Lou Gehrig, a player who played in 2,130 straight games, was a Yankee. Yogi Berra, one of the funniest and most talented baseball players ever to step onto the field, was a Yankee. And Joe Torre, a manager who captured his first World Series title this year, was a Yankee. Besides these five men, I hate the Yankees.

My grandfather has seen twenty-two Yankee World Championships; my father has seen thirteen Yankee World Championships; I have seen one Yankee World Championship. Each of us has seen no Red Sox World Championships. I'm sure Yankees fans would just say that my hatred towards them is jealousy for their twenty-three World Series Titles. That is completely false. Who wouldn't want to be a Red Sox fan, cheering for Ted Williams, Carl Yastrzemski, Cy Young, and Roger Clemens? My baseball fantasy is not having the Red Sox win the World Series, as some might expect; instead, it is imagining Game 7 of the World Series, bottom of the ninth, two outs, and the most hated Yankee player strikes out, crushing their World Series aspirations. As long as the Yankees suffer a worse fate than the Red Sox, the season is a success. When the Yankees lose, life is grand!



Daniel Welch, II



## Confident

I cry a lot,  
NO KIDDING  
I cry so much that tears are  
never a sacred thing anymore.  
I forget why they're even there.

She's so collected. I felt like crying then, too.

It's the first time I've really *watched* her and absorbed her and was in such awe at  
how cool and relaxed and in PERSPECTIVE she is that

I felt jealous.

And I hate even using the word.  
JEALOUS.

It's ugly and obtrusive and green  
with a jay.

And that makes me cry.

She's incredible. She's so intact that she knows her pieces.

And it's funny because I don't even think I'm crying for the RIGHT reasons anymore. There are so many  
things falling apart taking bits of me with their destruction for me to cry about and

I cry about  
HER.

She's beautiful and soft – always making the right moves with the right TOUCH of crazy; being pure and  
glowing, resonating her shine enough, restricting the parts

she WANTS,

but NEVER naive – always all-knowing. And it's funny too cause I know  
she's no GODDESS

Elle a beaucoup de fautes, but it's the ways she handles them – I even know she probably has more faults than  
I do myself but

I fall apart –  
she smiles and bounces and glows.

It's like she's perfect because  
that's what she wants it to be.

She doesn't live a perfect life but never thinks to make what's great horrible. A positive outlook.  
I try.

I honestly do but  
I just cry instead  
and if not it's all ignoring the FACTS, and so  
I'm caught

with a dark black hole in my throat – a hollow lump – pushing the sides of my throat apart with AIR –  
guilt, frustration, weakness open to swallow and  
(allow to fall).

the piercer to my wound. FEAR.

She seems indestructible, backed by confidence, reassured by her own justifications ...  
IT'S ALL ENOUGH

for her.

She's satisfied.

I keep looking.

I think she'd be happy her entire life. It's all fine because



she can make it that way.

Me,

I have to force it FINE.

Insatiable and greedy.

And, my god, do I admire her but HATE her for it.

Pang, pang, bang, bang ...

And her house. It's warm everytime you walk into it.

Like sunshine comes *from* their house, you can feel its warmth from the other end of the street.

It forces you to NOTICE it, but not obnoxious because

you FEEL it before you see it. It's humble, allowing solidarity and independence but

NEVER, NEVER

loneliness.

And people love her. They hate her for her independence and bragging but are drawn by that irresistible beauty – and

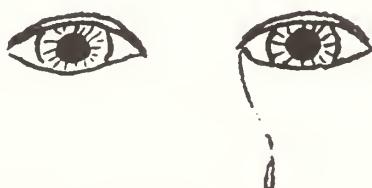
STRONG, strong flesh over a sweet baby's smile.

And it works.

It just all works for her, and it has

nothing to do with me.

Kay Perdue, II





## New york city is Pretend

Stuart Picard - grade nine

August 10, 1990

Asheville Valley Regional High School

My name is Stuart Louise Picard. Picard is actually my mother's last name. I guess that's kind of interesting. She's French. Me and Ahren, my brother, have my mom's last name cause my pop don't have none to speak of. He's a Cherokee Indian and that's why. They call him Wind Water, he used to be fast like the current in the Mississippi at dusk. It's real scary then and Ahren always told me to stay away from the rope swing else the water might run me where I don't want to go. Death and stuff gives me the willies but I think that's what he means. So I stay away, less I'm with Pop cause he wouldn't let nothing happen to his pretty baby. That's what he calls me. I guess this is supposed to be about me so I pray get on with it.

I ain't too sure who I am so for me the best thing I guess would be to sorta change the assignment around, just a little bit. I ask myself who am I? near every day, and I think all sorts of things so maybe it'd be all right if I just shared some of my thinkings with you.

For one thing I'm real glad to be at this fine high school. There are so many kids and though I have only yelled at em as of yet (some older boys from Crestville thought part of their football practice was to tackle me), I'm certain that soon I should make some of what mama calls proper introductions. She probly means something French but I'd be happy with just a good old American handshake.

One thing I did do that makes me a little special (but Ahren says just cause I'm pretty don't make me special), well, this july past I went up to New york city. And, well lots of things happened so even though it was so different I barely got a second to miss home. At least my mama went with me but see, she's been to New york city before so she knew where to go and she went. Now I know it's not too often that folks from Asheville county or anywhere round the southwesternly tip of Georgia go to New york city cause all the people I talked to kept saying stuff like you come from where? that must be another planet. Of course I meant to tell em all about the southwesternly tip of Georgia but mostly I only stopped em to begin with cause I had no idea how to get where I needed to go and they couldn't quite explain it right so I could get there so generally they smiled and went quick on their way, which always happened to be in an entirely different direction than mine so fact is I just didn't even get a chance. Now down here, I don't think anyone could go in so many directions. Anyhow, how come I was in New york city, well, even though being pretty don't make you special sometimes it does make people want to go somewhere, as I learned though they don't really do much telling you of how to get there.

See, last may I was voted May Belle in my junior high school (Cat Country Junior High School) and, well, this one boy named William Ethan Curtis Taylor The Third, who I think ain't grits more than snot, well, he had a daddy who tries to make friendly with pretty people, like for an occupation. Since we was graduating eighth grade and it's a big deal and all, Willy's daddy came to our big ceremonie. I guess something like when he saw me he needed to talk to someone right away cause right before we were suppose to get our diplomas and I come out right nice in my pink chiffon church bell dress, that I was wearing as Belle, he straightaway starts making a ruckus about our perfectly good school not being in the 20th century without



a fax machine. Whatever that is I don't know but as far as I know we are in 1990.

Next thing I know Mr. Taylor is driving us home in his very nice 1991 Cadillac Seville and talking numbers with my pop who even though I know I don't know much, seems to not want to have anything to do with this guy besides the ride home. In the end everybody was happy I guess because we went out to dinner at the P&H truck stop which is my favorite and they told me slicko was paying for it, and I said who's slicko and they just patted my hair and told me not to worry my pretty little head about a thing. They never done that before so I knew they was just happy for something entirely not having to do with me and unless I wanted to ruin it it'd be best if I shut my trap. Then they also said slicko was going to send me and mama on a summer vacation to New York city, which was a very interesting surprise so I was glad I had shut up when I had. Then the nice man who just happened to be whinin Willy's daddy came back, and said how was I excited about New York city and I said I was very much thank you. Then I decided that this man had got to be slicko cause I didn't remember no one else plus he was the one taking us out to P&H. I agree it is a pretty nice thing for him to do so I just smiled when they did and watched my peas and qs.

New York city was pretty different I guess and the place we stayed at, well it was no Big bed motel. Where we stayed was called the Presidential suite at the Plaza Hotel. It did have HBO and cable and a swimming pool and nice men who wore costumes just to open up doors for us. Mama liked them but never smiled because that was their job but I know my mama and her face couldn't fool me most especially when they called her Madum Picard. When they called me Madumoizell, I showed them all my teeth and laughed cause they always said it funny like they were from another country. Maybe they were cause once I was talking to one, and it was like all he did was smile. Now that I'm thinking, all of them New York city people all talked like their mouths was full, or they was choking and swallowed some words and burped some too.

So, I stayed there for awhile, about a month I guess cause I went July 2 and came back about a week ago. It's very hot there like South Carolina and sometimes I would have to wear big coats and they would cut up paper to look like snow but it was my job and slicko said I would only get to keep the cable if I did that so I did. Somedays it was hot enough to make an egg in the bird's nest on the sidewalk so then I just had to call slicko and say real nice I had a big pimple and he sent out the word that I was ill or some makeup guy had left me with a blemish and it would clear up in a day or so. He always told me to rest up, and I tried but for me resting down was best.

So then I got to sit by the pool and write letters to Ahren who I love most of anybody and pray that he was still in one piece even though he was a brave soldier. He is stationed on Parris Island off South Carolina 32071 and he doesn't write me much cause everyday he does the same thing and I told him that such being the case his letters were kind of boring. But I'm glad everyday he does the same thing cause he must be pretty good at it by now so I don't see how he could die. Which makes me very glad.

See, I wasn't suppose to come home until Thanksgiving holiday but one day when I was sitting by the pool something happened which I get real confused thinking about and mama told me was a very big deal and changed me, and since I'm not so sure about that, well it's just I don't want anybody counting on me one way and finding me not so all together grownup like mama says I am, after all. My mama is a smart lady and she always says sometimes its best to leave well enough alone and I don't want to be no bother cause any person with half a snatch



of sense would understand so maybe it's best I just hush. What I find very interesting and most peculiar is that all of a sudden when mama had seemed so happy and then she found out I was a married woman, well all of a sudden she went off on a tizzy about how new yorkers were inhumain and unfit for society, and me in this big city was a big mistake. Whatever the answer is, she is my mama and I guess she must know cause she was the smart one who brought me into this world, only she knows where I should go in it.

The thing about New York city was it made me real mixed up like how I never knew where I was going and I was always late for something and I got married. Like I know that it doesn't snow much around these parts so if it was to I'd know right off that something was wrong. But in New York city there is not so much a difference between real and pretend so like when a nice man with a big forehead named H.G. Hamilburg Jr. told me to follow him because I was late for the wedding I figured it had just skipped slicko's mind and since this was my job I had better say sorry for being late and H.G. said it was okay just to listen to him from now on, and they just dressed me up like usual, only I had never been a bride yet, and I smiled. I was a big bell the last time I did a ceremonie but I guess that's just different cause then I was a Belle and now I was a bride.

There were more cameras than usual and I guess someone else got confused that I had been kidnapped or something cause that's what it said on the front of a paper magazine. Slicko told me and mama never to get mad about what we see in magazines cause everybody has a bad day, but when some lady from California was reading the paper and saw me by the pool the next day, fine as a sweet spring day, mama real immediate-like said she was glad they'd found me, but then just as quick got real mad. Like I was lost when really I'd just been busy working and had only been in the hotel all the time. I was sorta proud I hadn't got lost too days in a row.

I guess this was an exception about getting mad though cause slicko came over and kept saying sorry and cussing at the window. They were yelling a lot but after it was quiet I came out of the nice closet but it was only all cause slicko left. Then lickity-split we left.

Pop was real surprised when he saw us cause we got new clothes and all and now mama has this hairdo called highlighting but really it looks kinda like a skunk. I told Pop I hadn't changed really at all and not to worry but he kept looking at me like he had looked at slicko. He said he missed me anyway and so I smiled and it was contajust.

The next day we went down to the river and sillied around with the rope swing until sundown when the water gets real fast. I told him I was growing up and I wanted to do it myself and being the southern gentleman mama always says he is he let me. When I cleared water I was looking for him but he was standing so still I near looked right by. Then his whole face moved and he kinda nodded real slow but sorta special to me. I know he was real proud cause I'm the only girl in these parts so brave.

That's really all I did this summer even though I did go to New York city and all. The only thing that changed much there was my name and mama says that's just pretend so I best just leave that up north where it belongs.



## Inside

One stumbles into that  
boxed abyss  
searching the naked walls  
like a mime trying to feel his way out  
shiny keys are never known  
for a door not to be found  
on the surface  
but maybe  
[within]  
it is open and exposed  
to no one  
not even herself  
unless a piece  
slips under the door of  
her existence  
when a heart skips,  
time falters,  
or eyes move rapidly,  
but the door to that  
soul,  
caged within the confines of being  
is only fully open  
when its eternity begins...

*Aparna Majmudar, III*

## Untitled

My beautiful hall of trees doesn't look so  
picturesque and mythical from up here.  
And my lonely sentries of the sea  
don't look so forbidding.  
I can't even see my lamp-posts.  
The clouds aren't even pretty.  
It's a big, brooding blanket hovering  
over me.  
But the sky's peeking through! A small  
patch of hopeful blue.  
Like a rose created from  
the dusty earth.  
Like a violin player playing in  
the middle of a traffic jam.

*Johanna Atkinson, III*



## Temptress

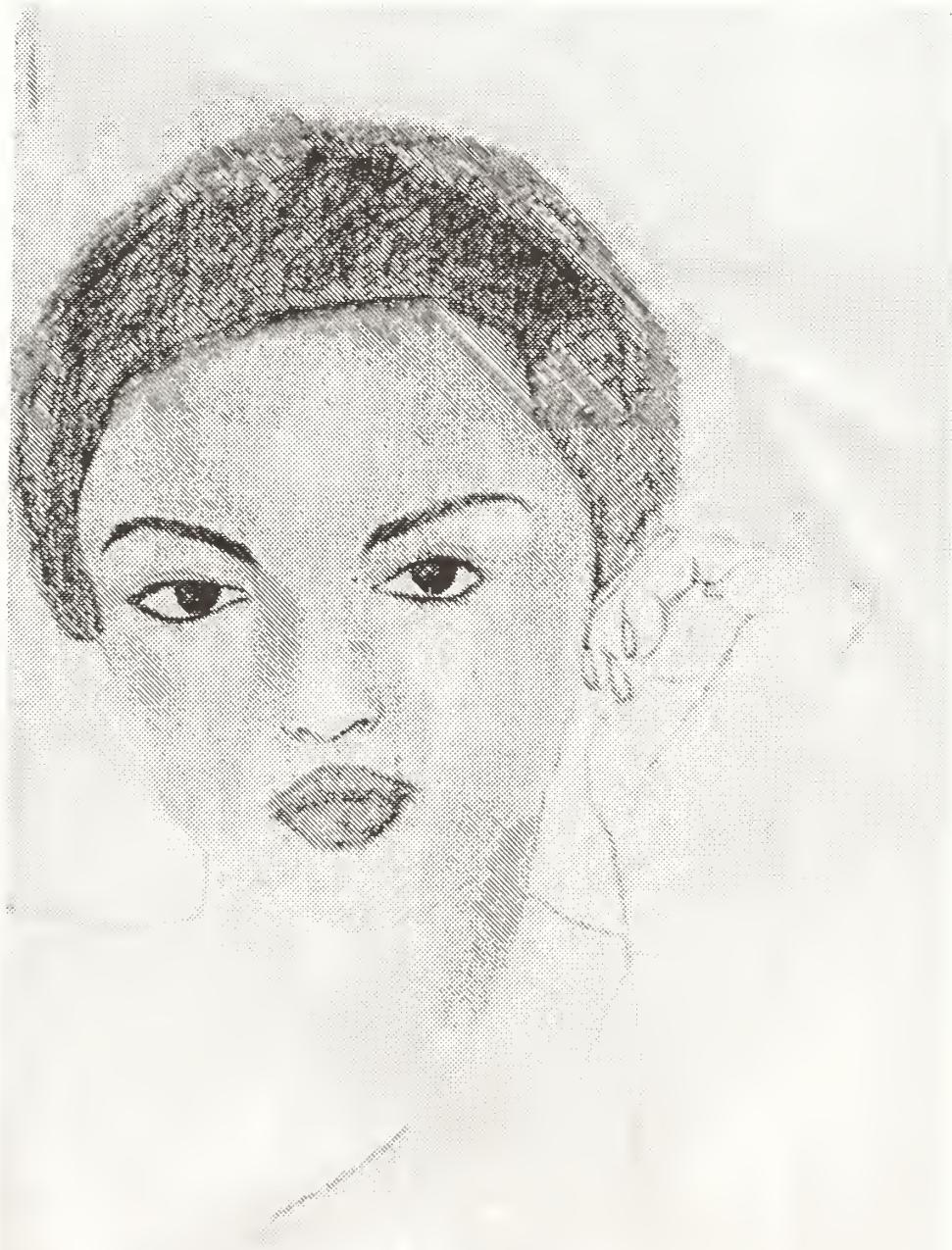
You sit so quietly  
in front of me  
that i feel you might just  
fade away,  
slip right out of my reach.  
As i grab your hand,  
holding it tight  
in she walks,  
Blood stained lipstick,  
tight red dress,  
eyes of a Nile queen.  
She's a seductress  
a tease  
the Perfect Whore.  
And as you begin to speak  
she sits but a table away,  
catching my eye  
each time I look at you,  
and although my heart  
will never leave your side  
i begin to lose your words  
in the dancing light of her eyes.  
Abruptly, your narrative stops.  
"Dammit are you even listening  
to me at all" you ask  
several times  
following my gaze,  
but seeing nothing.  
Like that she is gone,  
The lady Hope vanishes into the nite  
as invisible as she came.  
"Tell me again" I mutter  
returning and clutching you tighter,  
"Tell me again"

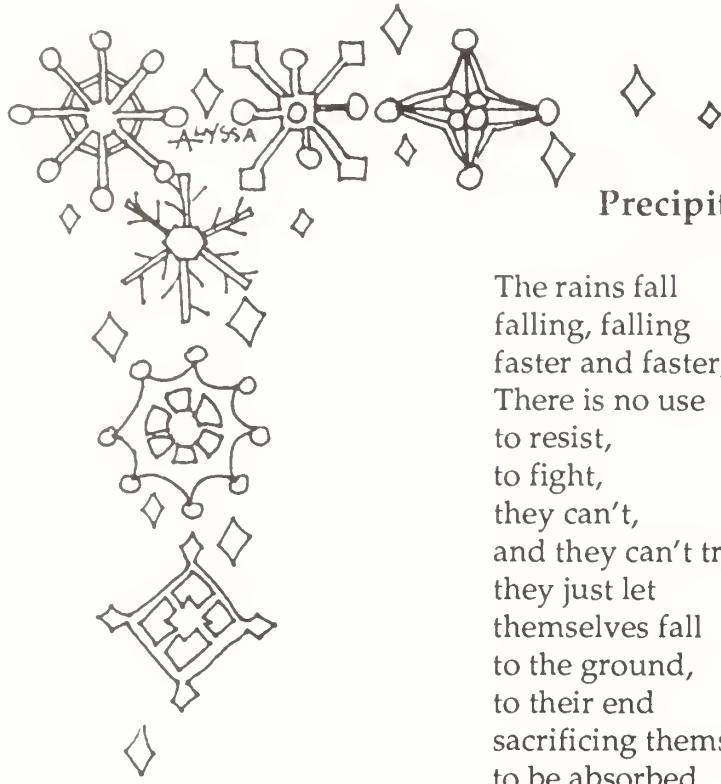
Meghan Doran, III

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*the register*, winter 1997

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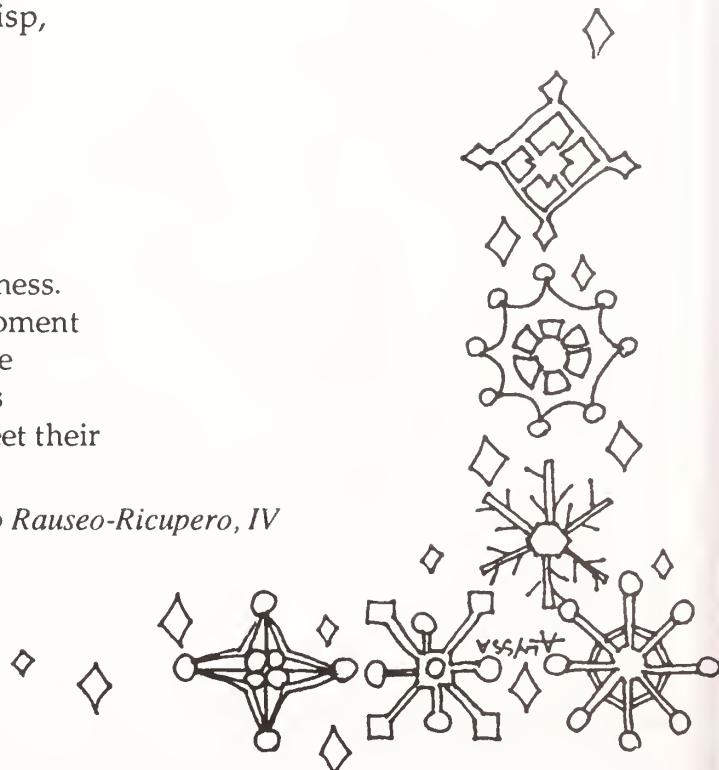


## Precipitation

The rains fall  
falling, falling  
faster and faster, never faltering.  
There is no use  
to resist,  
to fight,  
they can't,  
and they can't try:  
they just let  
themselves fall  
to the ground,  
to their end  
sacrificing themselves  
to be absorbed  
by the earth,  
for the common good  
they fall.

The snows fall  
lightly, gently,  
slowly, softly.  
Drifting down  
however they please  
without a care.  
Floating in the crisp,  
cool air, they fall.  
Waiting, excited,  
hoping for a  
glimpse of the  
children's faces  
glowing with the  
warmth of happiness.  
And after that moment  
of ecstasy they are  
surprised, for it is  
now that they meet their

*Ronaldo Rauseo-Ricupero, IV*





## Dumb College Essay

Many years later, he remembered his first experience with ice.

It had been cold. It was cold, and strange, so strange to him. Mysterious and magical, as he ran outside, seeing the whitish-translucent collections of water falling from the sky; water that had become hard, hard from coldness. He laughed like a child as they fell on his eyelashes, his nose; they fell on his tongue, and they tasted like clouds would taste. He could not believe these really came from *water*, these white hard things the people here called *hail*. So amazed he was to see them, that he rushed out, and he was standing under the streetlight, so that he could have been a *Hamlet* under the spotlight, soliloquizing on the subject of suicide, or marveling at his *Juliet*, and slowly, he realized this hard water *hurt*, it stung as it struck his skin, and he brought his hands up under the streetlight (*spotlight*), and saw the hail had left angry red welts. And this thought formed itself in his head, planted seeds and whispered to him, with conviction, its new-found truth: *cold turns soft things into things that hurt*.

He remembered this, as we walked along the sand of lake Michigan. I felt him distance from me, and I felt

### *The Tempest*

brewing in his chest. His fingertips, as they ran through his kinky hair, were red, turning colorless with frostbite. His South American skin was not conditioned for the windy city, for the north and ill-tempered weather. Yet he would not wear gloves or dress warmly, because he liked the strength of the cold.

He had not told me this, but I knew.

We walked silently, working our way towards the angry waves of the lake, breathing in the continually fresh and yet eternally nostalgic wind, catching trails of the smell of yesterday. Water flooded our shoes, and I bit my tongue to keep from screeching at the bone-chill cracking up my spine. He took off his shoes so he could throw away his wet socks. When we were back on the street, I insisted that he let me buy him some new socks. They had kitties on them. The kitties were green, and had yellow whiskers. When I put my numb fingers on a kitty, I swore I could feel a little heartbeat, like a tiny drum muffled under a pillow, the one I used to hear as a girl when I tried to sleep at night. Then I realized it was my heartbeat. Tears welled up in my eyes as I paid the clerk at the ValueVillage. Only in America can you buy kitty socks at 2 a.m. on a Wednesday morning for two bucks.

\*\*\*\*

When I went outside, he said "Are you crying(?)" and I said "The warm air made my eyes water" and I gave him the socks, and left him, alone, in front of ValueVillage. I said only these words: "This is our Appomattox." Like Appomattox, ValueVillage was my place of surrendering. Like Lincoln, he was tall and skinny. Like Lincoln, he was a great wrestler. As I walked away I thought

### *All's Well That Ends Well*

and nothing was well. Once, after all this, I asked him if he ever wore the kitty socks again and he told me he couldn't find them, and I thought how, once again

### *Love's Labour's Lost,*

lost and long gone with the kitty socks.

\*

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We had met at U of Chicago's Harper library. I tripped over his bag and knocked over his chair,



and after crashing down a shelf of books I landed on my butt. He laughed and I laughed as the librarian came over and kicked us out, or rather informed us that she thought we'd be "more comfortable somewhere else," as she was thinking that my

*Comedy of Errors*

had been a planned mischievous scheme between the two of us. We left and sat down outside to study, two banished hoodlums. He told me his name was

*Henry (IV, V, VI, VII)*

and "Hell" he said, "I might as well be the first, second, and third" and we shared blueberry yogurt with a spork he found in the bottom of his bag.

\* \*

cold.  
ice is cold.

\* \*

He was the foreigner, Chilean by blood but one of

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona,*

that I'd ever met (the other being the man who used to spin the pizza dough around on his fist across the street from me when I was a kid, when me and my friends would stand for hours, transfixed outside his pizza parlor window, as the dough went around and around and never broke). Born in Verona, he grew up in Bolivia. I had spent my whole life in this corner of the planet, was familiar with the northern city ways in America, and yet I was as much a stranger as he was. He was the one entranced by ice and sporks and lakes that looked like oceans, but did not have the salt of the ocean, but when he spoke with wonder of things new to him, I felt more detached from these things than he did. He accepted all he learned of this country, even the ValueVillages, the McDonalds, the car phones; he formed enough

ice

inside that he could laugh at these things. I try to learn how to do this.

I try.

\*

On the

*12th Night*

of August I dreamed that I

am running down a purple hallway, and the walls and floor and ceiling are beating, are pounding and trembling; I run frantic and not knowing why, I run through this never ending hall until I find three doors. I know that if I open the first one I will find the lost dead kitties. Behind the second door is Santa Claus in a devil's costume, furiously riding a hobbyhorse and screaming the secret lost sounds of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphics; and I'm afraid he'll shoot me in the head with an Hydrochloric-Acid filled water gun if I attempt to wake up with Egyptian on my tongue: so I open the third door and find Henry dancing with one hand around my 9th grade boyfriend, dressed as he was when he played

*The Merchant of Venice*

in our high school play, and in Henry's other hand a bucket of flesh and ice. Henry is belting out StairWay to Heaven at the top of his lungs, but at the chorus he screams (sings), "This is

*As You Like It*

\*



I woke up from my  
*Midsummer Night's Dream*  
and put on some shoes and walked down to the lake.  
\*\*\*

I sat in the sand looking out over the water, the water which changes and flows and fights violently with itself and spits wildly, spits white, sudsy foam, swallows it and spits it back. I looked out on the horizon, at the lake which disguises itself as an ocean and I could almost imagine that it folded around the whole world, that there was only me and the never ending lake, and its

never ending wake.

I felt someone sit down next to me. I did not turn my head and neither one of us spoke. Appomattox had been many months before. How many winter nights we spent here, and now it was warm, and I felt betrayed by the warmth. The cold always made me want to reach out, made me feel the fire which I thought ran through Henry's veins. But now the warmth made me angry for every time the distance (*The Tempest*) had come between us, when all my words had hit his silence like ugly, awkward birds, and I had burned at the loss of my friend, my Henry. I burned and hated my ugly birds; I burned that he was a few feet away and a million miles inside himself. Remembering this, at the lake, I stood up, hating him violently, trembling, and red red red was in me. I pulled off my shoes, and walked straight and unflinching into the majestic sea of spit. I wanted the water to be all around me, and to keep any water from leaving me, leaving my eyes, betraying me.

I could hear the singe of my skin as my rage was cooled. I turned around, and seeing our vacant impressions in the sand, thought he was gone. My eyes, having adjusted to the night, found him standing a few feet away, in ankle deep water. His eyes were unblinking, yet I could feel that they were searching my face though the gray, powdery night. I studied him,

*Measure for Measure,*

I felt for what my words wanted to be; I felt *if* my words wanted to be. Waves swished over his feet, burying them in the sand. He was wearing the kitty socks.

"Do you remember the night you told me

*The Winter's Tale*

about the ice?" My words flew and hovered. He nodded. "You didn't say it, but I knew what you realized, what you realized that first night of ice." He said nothing, but his mouth opened, his jaw worked for a grasp on ideas. I started to walk, and he next to me, slowly making our way through the sand, leaving our shoes to be swallowed. When I spoke again, the strength of my voice was gone, it came as a whisp of sound, spinning in the air - "The cold makes things you knew into things you can't recognize." We stopped, faced each other. "It makes ice" I whispered. I smiled.

Addy Parker, I



## Debut

She wakes to the blinding glare of sun peering through white curtains. She wakes from holding her breath as she waits in the wings. Each night, a new prayer to the same hope that the dawn will bring her long awaited debut as a woman. A time when she will walk along with time and the world stands still to watch her through sun-streaked windows.

She wakes in the same bed, with the same man; this is the same life. She paces down the sixteen steps on her bare toes, although the stairs are carpeted and he is a heavy sleeper. She is mindful of the one time she stepped on a piece of broken glass, the shaving of a heavily detailed vase, his wedding gift to her; she had knocked it over by accident and had done a poor job of cleaning it up, hurrying so because he would be coming home any minute. Some of the glass remained. And so he woke from sleep to find her sitting on the stairs blotting the blood on the carpet with a paper towel with her right hand, and cupping the blood of her foot with the other. She almost suffocated holding in the tears. He doesn't scold her and she doesn't try to explain. There is no use for such words in this place.

She stands in the kitchen, knowing to count to five after hearing his footsteps so that she is pouring coffee just as he walks in. He doesn't say anything to her, except maybe that she'll have to prepare for a dinner party next Tuesday, she'll have to make some calls. "I'd like to introduce you to my lovely wife...she arranged this affair," he'll say, to which she must reply "Good evening," smile showing her teeth, and tell them her name, as if she is ever called anything other than "D's wife."

She knows the way things work; she has known all along. As her childhood was stolen from her, she waited to be a girl, and now she waits to be a woman. She knows the unspoken but understood manners of gentility which rule over her. She the wife will act pleased at all times; never overjoyed – content, never disappointed – content. She is a fixture to her husband's arm, his crutch, even. He can't live without her.

*I met D. when I was nineteen. It was sunset at the university while we were both at break. While I*





was reading a letter from the last of my friends to move away, a tear slid down the side of my face and stopped at the corner of my mouth. I tasted its saltiness and locked my eyes shut. As he stood before me, I felt his words at my ears but couldn't find them anywhere near his mouth. Somehow, he talked to me through his whole self, the words fluttered around him in an enchanting rhythm. In all truth, there were no sparks like those in movies, no immediate connection, but they came in time. He held me as we watched the scarlet curtain mask the ashen sky. From then on we spent every ruby explosion together; sometimes we would skip classes so we wouldn't miss it. Some of the sunsets were like what I imagined heaven to look like, others were hardly divine, but the one that remains in my mind is the sunset from the summer evening when the sky was tinted with brilliant shades of purple. That was the night he asked me to marry him.

Five years later we stopped to see the sunset if we had time, and now, nine years later I sleep most of the day away. Now I see that the sunset merely veils the dusty sky; the dust is always in the distance, it's just hidden sometimes. I dream no more of blazing twilights; it is far too late to even try to go back and so I try not to remember those horizons of fire. The beauty of those moments is too painful. I know that I will never again feel that passion; the sun has set on me.

"I made reservations."

"Oh."

"Oh."

"What?"

"Oh, I, nothing, I just thought you might wear the black."

"Oh...all right."

"Oh, no, you don't have -"

"No, if you like the black, I'll change..."

"Well, are you sure, I mean you're already dressed..."

"Oh, no, the black fits me better anyway..."

"All right."

Maybe it happened then. Or maybe it was when flowers stopped coming to the door every Friday. Maybe it was the night I told him I'd never leave him. When he knew I'd stay.

She is not beaten, her fingers are not worn dry to the bone, she has not fallen under the weight of the earth. He comes home on time, clean with pure words of truth. She's kept quiet but has faith and much patience. Leaving him never even entered her mind. What would he do without her? In a way she feels they both need each other in the life they know to be right. She finds herself once again looking out the window, watching the fleeting colors dance in an eternal wheel where she was never given a turn. Her years are spent rehearsing life, waiting for her place in the sun.

Kim Dang, II



## Penciled Heaven

penciled heaven  
my regards  
no when to stop  
- Jim Morrison

no when to stop  
not solely because of lack of time  
to consider the destination (birth, death)  
but also because to consider it  
would be presumptuous  
on the part of a mortal;  
                          mortar  
in whose hands, I wonder  
                          what current  
pulls hard, pulls me softly under,  
                          painless?  
is that the limit to which  
                          I'm destined  
                          to travel?  
please unravel my dreams!  
                          if only a god (God) existed  
                          he would.  
It's true though, what they say  
                          in chapels  
                          at deathbeds  
One's never late when Death bids him  
                          to come and visit  
                          or stay forever  
not solely because of lack of time  
to consider the invitation  
but also because to consider it  
would be presumptuous  
on the part of a mortal.

*Kate Fruman, I*



## Marina (Here-There Poem)

Once there had been boats at a different pier  
Smelling of roe in the raw of grey air,  
And looking at boats through windows here  
Transports me in mind to the way it was there.

Nostalgia in mothballs reeks sweetly of fear,  
Of pictures of things that would never have cared  
If, having once settled forever on here,  
I stopped to remember the life I left there.

As summer comes hot at the birth of a year  
Insomnia grows a little more rare,  
And only my mind, firmly anchored to here,  
In memory's tide is drawn nightly to there.

*Kate Fruman, I*

## Milk

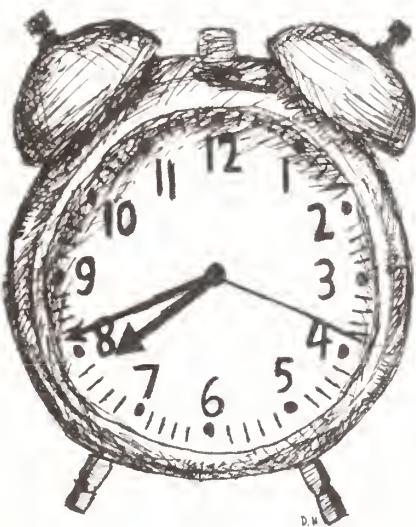
you just can't do  
everything you want  
sleeping she smiles at me  
there's an innocence  
only streetlights can kill  
darkness makes me love  
the streets are bare  
stripped like a raped girl  
blue blankets frame her curls  
concrete cannot glow  
where even dirt is sterile  
somehow I think she shines  
beauty makes me envy  
envy makes me hate  
her soft skin untouchable  
spiteful I flick the light switch  
and watch her squint –  
no more pretty mystery  
defensive: I am happy.  
the sidewalks rustle  
with leaves dry and faded  
a lonely wind shocks me to remorse.  
harsh clatters like fluorescence  
on pale skin break the peace  
selfish shadows  
hide a shallow little girl.

Jessica Clark, II



## Time

The sound bellows at me. The sound howls at me. The sound barks at me. The sound screams at me. Its monotonous cry surprises me like the cymbal crash during the Star Spangled Banner. Its roar inexorably imminent, and yet its repulsive shrieks unjust. This sound, this noise, this earsplitting clamor lures me from my utopia, full of roses, soft as clouds, waterfalls, majestic as the Sistine Chapel, and fruits, sweet as maple syrup. Its everlasting wail strangles my luminous existence. My unguarded defenses have little chance against the unconditional dominance of the noise. I silently shout at it with defiance but its unrelenting grasp suffocates my objection. My pure soul pleads, begs, implores it to cease. "It isn't my time. I'm not ready."



It has no right to force me to escape from my slumber. A slumber enriched by the softness of my blanket, wrapped around me like a mother bird guarding its young; enriched by the coherence of my head on the pillow, like a flower on its stem; enriched by the succor of my mattress, a home on its foundation. When I first climb into bed, childhood images of training wheels, red wagons and Christmas morning enter my mind. I gaze up at the ceiling, looking at the glow-in-the-dark stars that fill my cathedral, and wonder if young children with sparkling eyes used to gaze up at the stars thousands of years ago, dreaming if there were other planets. I am peaceful, having no troubles, no worries, no annoyances, no injustices, no complaints. It gladly murders my purity, and captures my innocence, dragging me in handcuffs to reality.

It gladly murders my purity, and captures my innocence, dragging me in handcuffs to reality. One moment: euphoria, elation, ebullience; the next: despair, despondency, depression. It deliberately makes me forget my daffodils, my sun, my rainbow, and instead of bringing me down gently, throws me without warning, tumbling down a mountain slope with rocks sharp as blades, each unmercifully piercing my sides, until I reach my undeserved predetermined fate. As I am unwillingly introduced to reality, my mind is cluttered with thoughts of hitting a home run for the Red Sox to win the World Series, swishing a three-pointer at the buzzer giving the Celtics their seventeenth championship, and making the Presidential Inauguration Speech to millions of people lining the Washington Mall. I struggle to familiarize myself with the carpet on my floor, the color on my ceiling, and the basketball hoop hanging on the door. As I clumsily stagger to find the light switch, my hand runs over an object, cold and foreign. Every morning for my entire life, I have flipped that switch, but each time, it is new.

On many cold, frostbitten days, I have made an attempt to regain my bed of roses by reaching for its temporary silence, a button not uncommon to many and attached with abundant guilt. When I first touch the porcupine, its spikes dig into my skin and it remains, held by barbs; I ask it to sustain my request and it deceitfully accommodates. The accommodation releases my tension, but the soreness in my neck reminds me of my fragility. It sympathetically allows me to taste my maple syrup. I am again at utter peace, but this time, the clouds have no angels and the ponds have no fish. Then, deservedly, it hurls me down the



cliff. The mountain is not lined with razors though, it is jagged with machetes, thirsty for blood. As I arise, the taste of succulent strawberries, lush blueberries, and Epicurean grapes is replaced with complete exiccation, longing to be quenched.

On occasion, I successfully suppress it. I reach to silence it and am quickly taken aback. The box, even though it is small and insignificant as dust, bites me. I am attacked with coldness, a hunter finding its prey. Its mouth foams with ferocity. Somehow, I manage to loosen its grip and quell it. I marvel in my victory by returning to my animated frolicking. Once I recover to harsh, unfair reality, I smirk at it, snickering at its easy defeat. My mouth mocks its once-foaming aura, disrespecting it by disregarding it. I report to it that I returned, not because of its prejudiced expectancy, but because of my principled readiness. Then I realize, after glancing at it again, that its numbers are laughing at my uncombed hair, and I am embarrassed and defeated. As I run for it, my feet fuming with tardiness, the last thing I see is its smile, a smile so cunning and insidious the devil himself would have been proud.

When it wins, I feel defeated, but also assured, like a mother allowing her child to win at Scrabble. I gain confidence in my tiresome defeat, since others who were victorious against it, and are enjoying their rainbows, are feeble against reality. Those who were victorious succumb to the harsh, cruelty of the beast, its mouth foaming with rage, its eyes bulging with deceit. Because of my treacherous loss, I attack life with eagerness and willingness. My feeling of vivacity makes up for my shortened time in Oz. If it weren't there for me, my day would be spent trying to regain the lost time that I had squandered. If it wasn't there for me I would lose the sunrise, the sounds of the birds, and the yawns of the young. We rely on each other, like friends growing up, like a river in its bed, like time in life.

*Daniel Welch, II*



## Christmas Spirit

When we first moved into our new house, I was not yet four years old. I don't remember much about the first year there, but I have been told that it was not very idyllic. My parents say that there was a turtle living in the claw-footed, white enamel bathtub when we arrived, and there was only one room that was not in need of repair. I have a memory of being enlisted to paint the dining room but getting more paint on my face and hands than the wall.

My father was an unemployed law student and my mother was a beginning filmmaker at WGBH Channel 2. Dinner sometimes became a candlelight affair to my ignorant delight because the electric company had become impatient waiting for the payments that we couldn't pay. I didn't really understand much at that age; I just picked up on the feelings of those around me. I would sublimely play with my Humpty Dumpty doll and watch Sesame Street at 3:00 every afternoon. Humpty Dumpty was a plush egg whose permanent attachment to my hand puzzled my parents. As most children's toys are, he was dirty and ragged and loved without reservations.

Our first Christmas in the new house was exciting for me. The year before, I had only been three and still too young to understand such a vague concept as "Christmas." The rituals of picking the perfect tree in below zero weather and spending an evening trying in vain to get the stubborn tinsel on the branches of the tree were unknown. That's where Sesame Street came in. A good month before the big two-five, Bert and Ernie were already shopping for a Christmas tree and sneaking around to buy each other's gifts. By the time Christmas had already arrived, I was hopping with impatience for the festivities to begin.

I had reminded my parents for days to get a gift for Humpty Dumpty. I said that I didn't want him to be left out. Looking back, I was trying to trick them into getting me two gifts. I was naively proud of myself to think of such a clever trick, not realizing that my parents could hear me confessing my tiny transgression to Humpty Dumpty, in whose pink, felt ear I disclosed all my simple sins.

So, with the expectation of piles of presents, I could barely force myself into bed on Christmas Eve. My parents warned me to go to sleep or else Santa wouldn't come, but my four-year-old common sense had already decided that it was impossible for a sleigh pulled by reindeer to fly through the air carrying a fat man in a red suit and enough presents for me and every other kid in the world. Thus that threat was not very effective, but I closed my eyes and pretended to be asleep anyway. I was horrified when I woke up the next morning. I had missed my chance for an unobserved scouting of the tree area.

I jumped out of bed and put on my Ernie slippers. As quietly as I could with my limited four-year-old strength and a sticking door, I pulled open the portal to Christmas morning. I was on a mission to discover what I had been given. I crept through the kitchen, freezing every time I stepped on a squeaky floorboard. After what seemed like an eternity, I reached the raised threshold between the kitchen and the hallway that led to the living room. Then came the hardest part. I would have to sneak past my parents' room and make it onto the safe haven of the living room carpet without making a single sound. My heart pounded in time with a repeating litany of possible punishments if I were found out. Reaching the living room had become a mission more important than making it to the bathroom before I wet my pants.

I slowly put one foot out and started towards the living room. I kept one eye on my

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parents' door and one on the Christmas tree. It sparkled and glimmered, the ornaments tuning it into a beacon as bright as Venus on a clear night. Although it only came up to my nose, it seemed to tower up to the ceiling. I quickened my steps as I got closer, the scent of pine dissipating my caution.



When I reached the tinsel laden tree, I saw only one wrapped package under the waxy, prickly leaves. However, it was a pretty big package, almost as tall as the tree, so I quickly shoved quantity out of my mind in favor of quality. I held my breath as I tore open the gift. Bits of red and gold paper flew every which way, landing on the couch and, more often, on my head. All of a sudden, the radiance of my present was revealed. The bluish-green plastic on the outside framed a picture of a blond cherub, and although I could not read the words on the wrapper, I realized what it was. Such a package had been my constant companion since birth. Now, though, as I got older, the package was seen less and less frequently, except when I stole its contents to use on Humpty Dumpty.

Then, suddenly, I heard the sound of feet behind me. My face felt as if it were boiling, although it didn't show. As I turned around, I caught a glimpse of the pink, flowery fabric of my mother's nightgown and my father's battered leather slippers. I was finished. My Sesame Street privileges would be taken away for a week. I could feel the anger of my parents

pouring down on me, until I looked up and saw the hope in their expressions. I glanced down at the package and then peered up at them, a luminous smile on my face. "Humpty Dumpty says thank you for the diapers," I said. My parents beamed down at me and I felt Christmas all around me.



## Small as a World and Large as Alone

*"... may came home with a smooth round stone  
as small as a world and as large as alone.*

*For whatever we lost (like a you or a me)  
it's always ourselves we find in the sea."*

- e.e. cummings

Emily had grown up next to the sea, but she never felt she lived near it. She loved places where you could walk barefoot, and the sea by Newport was not one of those places. It demanded more energy and attention than she wanted to give it, so she happily walked through her childhood only on the soft lawns of her small town.

Emily was not plump physically, but everyone who met her felt that somehow there was a plumpness to her personality; she would bruise easily but she was not strong enough to shatter. She was no more or less popular than any of the other girls in her town, but she never went without friends. By the time she turned seventeen, in 1877, she had begun to think of herself and her schoolmates collectively. They flocked together into the village, a gaggle of long skirts and ruffled blouses, hair piled elaborately and stylishly on top of their heads. The neighbors affectionately nicknamed them "the chickadees": cheerful and flighty, and you never saw one alone.

Emily's town was close enough to Newport to draw a few sailors and merchants, but these strangers were still rare enough to attract attention. It had become something of a ritual: when a new visitor arrived who was handsome, young, or romantic enough to deserve their notice, they would scrutinize him with an intensity more characteristic of a bird of prey than a flock of chickadees. The unlucky chosen one would find, upon attempting to do business at the general store which served as the center of town, that his every move was being watched attentively; a smile would elicit soft sighs from the group in the corner, a frown would bring clucks of sympathy. The visitor usually took this in stride and completed transactions quickly until the attention of the girls was stolen by another hapless young man.

This ritual had become so natural that when he walked into the store, all the girls knew that he would be The One. The active town gossips had already spread word of this young man: he was eighteen, he was a sailor, and he had just come in on a clipper ship from Wales. These first two credentials had secured him the temporary interest of the girls, and they were prepared when he came. He turned to them politely and nodded. If he was puzzled by the answering giggles, he did not show it on his face as he spoke with the store's owner, gave the man some letters to mail, and began to go out. Already "the chickadees" were sighing over his eyes that were green and mysterious as a cat's. Emily contributed a murmur of agreement, but something stopped her from joining in with her usual gusto. She felt somehow that treating this one like any other would be wrong; besides, his eyes hadn't been green like a cat's at all, they had been green like the moss growing on the north side of the trees, like the underside of a leaf. The boy turned back good-naturedly to toss a final smile to the group, but when his eyes moved to Emily, he froze and the smile left his face immediately. He stood for no more than a few seconds before he abruptly turned and left. The girls giggled and happily discussed the



smile and its varied meanings, while Emily glowed from the lack of a smile she had received. He was just indulging them, she thought, separating herself from "them" for the first time in as long as she could remember. He didn't have to indulge me.

Emily was late meeting her group the next morning and they flitted into town, oblivious of her absence. She was walking as quickly as her piled hair would allow, moving her hands nervously and unconsciously. She felt at something of a loss without the others and looked ahead urgently, focused on the cloud of pink muslin just visible around the corner of the general store, so she didn't see the boy as he came out of the boarding house and bumped into her. She stood for a moment without acknowledging his apologies, flustered by her aloneness and her surprise and his moss-green eyes. When he finished apologizing, he looked at her curiously. "Emily?" he asked cautiously; she simply nodded, assuming that one of the gossips had told him her name. "I'm Daniel," he added. She nodded again. He licked his lips as if wanting to say more, but instead quickly stepped out of her way with a small, self-mocking bow. She hurried on to her group, but she knew he was still watching her and almost tripped over her skirt from anxiety.

For the next week, the girls watched Daniel as he watched Emily. By Friday another sailor had come to town, this one with eyes blue as the sea (even Emily had to admit to herself that they did not deserve any better description than that cliché), and the girls shifted their attention to their new chosen one. Daniel took this opportunity to approach Emily on two more occasions, an easier task now that he was not under surveillance. Their conversations were brief: he did not seem eager to talk of anything more complicated than the weather, and she was rarely away from the flock. Still, when he asked her to meet him one afternoon to go for a walk, she did not feel surprised at all.

They met in near silence. He explained briefly that he wanted to go to a place by the shore where he had been on his last visit, and she didn't feel it would be an appropriate time to bring up her dislike of the ocean. They hiked through the crags that skirted the shore, Emily deliberately not looking at the sea and trying to keep her shortness of breath to herself. Finally Daniel sat down on a ledge of rock and Emily gratefully collapsed beside him. She had lived in this place all her life, so she was familiar with the cliffs and hills that led down to the beach, but she had never found them very interesting. The rocks were jagged and uninviting, covered with uneven patches of green and brown. Spruce trees covered the small hill that rose behind the rocks, and somewhere between the hill and the sea the land melted into indecisive, tan and green sand. Daniel sat in silence, gazing intently out over the landscape. Emily wanted desperately to say something; she had never been very good at sitting still, even when sitting with a boy with moss-green eyes.

It was he who first broke the silence, and his words surprised her. "My favorite birds are gulls," he said suddenly, then asked her intensely, "Do you like gulls?" Emily, while stifling nervous giggles at the intensity of the question, wanted to say no, she hated them, they were dingy thieves who screeched and soared, water tramps who put on terrible airs. All she could manage was, "They're all right." She added hesitantly, "They ... they do make a lot of noise, though." He thought about this comment for some time, longer than Emily felt was necessary. Just as she began to feel nervous again, he answered, "Yes, but they never scream without a reason." Then he fell silent again. They sat on the rocks so long Emily's eyes became numb from the green-greyness of the landscape. After what seemed an eternity, Daniel rose



without comment and led the way back.

Although Emily and her friends thought of themselves as "true romantics," their actual, one-on-one contact with boys had been virtually nonexistent, and their ideas of romance were lifted straight from the penny romance magazines in the general store. By magazine standards, Emily's walk with Daniel had been terribly uneventful: neither had looked deeply into the other's eyes, there had been no impromptu compositions of love sonnets, and no dark secrets from the past had been revealed. Emily considered the encounter an obvious failure, and was so surprised when Daniel turned to her and said, "I had a wonderful time. It was very ... interesting. Will you meet me again?" that all she could do was nod. He strode back to the boarding house quickly without looking back, and Emily ran to find her group. She talked all afternoon, just to hear her own words.

After the first time, Daniel didn't have to ask her. She met him every day in front of the boarding house and they walked together to the same spot. The third time she went with him, he only looked at the ocean for a moment, then he began to stare through her. She knew he was watching her, but she looked fixedly ahead, wondering why she had come back. Finally he pointed to a sheer cliff in front of them. "It looks like a woman," he said shortly, but she could feel him waiting for her reaction. Trying to be judicious, she examined the cliff. It was the highest of the rocks, a sheer drop-off where a grey-green tableau ended in a confused pile of rocks. She had felt somehow when she first arrived that this cliff had a presence, a sense of pride that raised it above the others. Still, she could not honestly see a woman, so she had to respond, "I guess. Where ... where's her head?" He shrugged with an air of slight disappointment, and Emily felt absurdly insulted. "There isn't really a head or a body. It just looks like a woman waiting." He didn't say anymore, but Emily knew somehow she had fallen short.

When they began visiting the cliffs, Emily thought she would drown in the silence. She listened desperately for some sound until she thought she could hear the sea. She knew the sea was at least a mile away, and decided she had simply been imagining things. One day she could make out a tiny flock of gray spots on the beach. She asked Daniel what they were and he told her, his tone strangely full of pride and happiness, that they were sandpipers. For a minute she heard their voices mixed with the sound of the sea, until her common sense reminded her how impossible that would be.





As the weeks passed and they continued to visit the shore, Emily realized that she couldn't remember when she had really met Daniel. She remembered seeing him in the store that day, remembered bumping into him in the street, remembered their first walk, but she knew that somewhere between then and now was the place when she met Daniel. He rarely talked at all, and even more rarely talked about himself. He told her one day that he had been born in Nova Scotia, but it was several weeks later before he talked about the place.

He said that where he grew up, the sea and the shore ran into each other so cleanly that you couldn't tell one from the other. He said that he used to climb down the cliffs and stand on pieces of the crag that had fallen into the sea, with the surf breaking around him, and try to figure out if he was on the land or in the ocean. He showed her a piece of the rocks from around his home – gray slate shot through with agate crystals. He said that the first time he had been away from the sea was when he had gone to live with his relatives in Pennsylvania for a summer, and that he had felt adrift and lonely, not listening to the surf pounding somewhere. Emily, still in shock that he had revealed so much in one day and not wanting to startle him back into silence, had to ask him, "Do you still feel homesick? I, I mean when you're at sea?"

He looked at her curiously for a minute and she was sure she had said the wrong thing. Suddenly he smiled. "I was afraid in Pennsylvania because I couldn't hear the ocean when I first arrived. But I found out that I didn't have to hear it any more. I knew what it sounded like, do you understand? I still had what it sounded like inside. I just had to listen ... not harder, just ... differently. I was born where I belonged, I didn't have to look. But just because I belong in Nova Scotia, that doesn't mean I have to *be* there all the time." He narrowed his eyes at her and said softly, "Because once you're quiet enough to hear it, you don't have to be anywhere to be where you belong."

When Daniel told her he was leaving, for less than a second Emily's heart pounded faster and her ears filled with pressure and she was plunged into silence. But then her heart slowed and she heard the ocean and she realized that she wasn't sad at all. She asked him where he was going but only because it seemed the polite thing to do; he may have answered, but she couldn't remember what he said. She walked down to the docks with him on the day his ship sailed. She wished him good luck, and he promised to come to see her if he ever sailed near Newport again. And that was all.

Emily walked up to the cliffs the next day, but it was not on a final journey to mourn his departure or a tearful remembrance of the times they had had together. It was just ... habit. She sat on the rock and watched the gulls scream and tried to define the waiting woman's features. She sat like this for a long time until she had worked up the nerve to ask herself why she wasn't thinking of him. She already knew the answer: he wasn't that important. She wished he were. She wished she could cry and see in the cliffs all the things he had seen and swear never to forget him, but she couldn't.

This place was not her essence. It had been his. She knew that she would come here for a long time, because there had been something in him that had spoken to her. Still, this space belonged to Daniel. He had shared it, but he couldn't give her anything. He could only show her that she lived near the sea.



## A Girl In Blue

Humming and dodging  
mom and dad's attempts  
to "straighten" (ha ha)  
things out ...

So I'm a girl and  
I'm flitty and  
flakey and  
swooney and  
clad in heels and a romantic blue dress,  
brushing past books with gloved fingers. (a picture)  
And she asks why am I all dressed up.  
Just came from a play  
I sing  
not looking up from the book (dork, dork, dork).  
I am afraid to smile too hard.  
Instead I bite my lip  
nervously  
and press my lips against my teeth (dork, dork, dork).  
You look very pretty (with a smile – I hope?) –  
I'm a little girl in blue  
with shiny mary jane heels  
blushing and stammering behind my flushed face (why does that always happen).  
No words,  
breath caught  
sweet at the back of my throat,  
tip of my tongue,  
oh and tingling, like a trapped sneeze on my nose.  
Lips part,  
thanks (chirp) (ah, cringe, awkwardness)  
with more red running to my face and sweat to palms –  
(breath).  
Her dreadlock falls and,  
uninterested she turns away  
to resume her own conversation while pushing it back behind  
her tan ear.  
I skip and  
float away,  
tasting my sweet lips (over and over),  
bright(en)ing) my eyes –  
big sparkles.



ha, ha – giddiness  
turns to (ha, ha). I laugh at myself,  
at the idea.

A girl in blue and heels.

A girl in rustling blue  
with white hearts and

a pair of shiny heels with the strap and everything ...

Girls who love girls do NOT have long blonde hair and gloved arms.

Laugh at that person convincing me that I feel this way

(who's convincing me I feel this way?)

(who's convincing me I don't feel this way?)

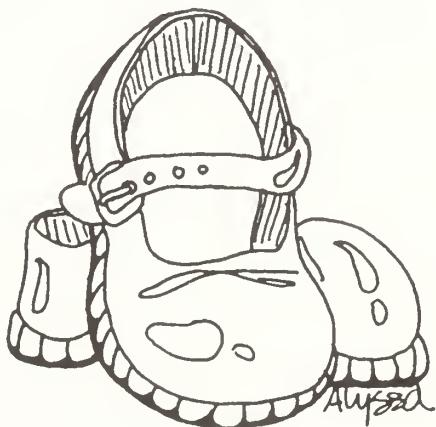
(who's convincing you I don't feel this way?)

(I'm not asking –)

I'm wearing blue with  
hearts and heels and

I'm in love.

*Kay Perdue, II*





## Night Song

She balanced on the edge of her mattress and stared at the pink roses blooming on her pillow case with such a focused intensity as to keep the status of this fight below the median of all others. Subconsciously her eyes closed. In her dark she could study the time just passed. Down the moonlit stairs she had gone with a casualness acquired through repetition. Lightly closing the glass paneled door on the chilly front hall, she had walked the straight path, on wood in the stuffy den and on foot-friendly slate in the spacious kitchen, to the key rack, only directing her thoughts away from her destination once, her eye being hooked by the glistening gold 12:07 on the oven clock. Lifting the two old keys, unlocking the bolt and then the knob, opening, closing, and re-locking the back door, she let Ginger out into the late August breeze, finally silencing her bark.

Her face tingled from the balmy air she had captured when she clicked the door closed. She had placed her nose right in front of the glass, but tilted down a little, so she could still look out from one of the rectangle windows without the discomfort of breathed-on glass. Complacently she reviewed the tiny stars, the dark, Ginger's tail disappearing behind the shed and emerging on the other side of the fence, and then she had definitely turned back, beginning to dream about her two pillows and down comforter.

Her eyes still closed, pillow in her arms, she took only a second to relish her recollection of that natural bliss—the wishfulness in that almost crisp air. It was that sharp turn of the doorknob, ten thousand cries all at once as the metal hinges swung open from the front hall, and the blast of a different air that had made her suck in deeply, air that stung her teeth as it passed over and seemed to make her lungs collapse. It wasn't the appearance of her step-father in his under clothes with pillow-ed hair and unbalanced glasses that was unsettling. She had been frozen by the eruption of accusations from his animated face. The sound had been like someone banging on a saloon piano. Too loudly. Chords of an indeterminate key had ricocheted throughout the room. Every measure had suffocated her thoughts. The melody was nonexistent. The lyrics had been poorly learned: "What are you about, walking, startling, prying sane people from their beds. Never, never . . . Where is your head, consideration, . . . am I communicating . . . Communication is the key . . . did you put them back on the rack, foolish, never . . . never . . ." She had wanted to open the windows and turn on some lights, alert other senses so the jarring pain of that noise could have lessened in her ears. He had pounded out the drum beat of this horrible ballad. The pulse was his footsteps as he moved closer; however, her heart had accelerated the pacing.

Beat, beat, baboom.

Could it have been more poorly rehearsed? She thought not. Her shrinking away, just like some timid creature snagged in a lair, she had watched in the reflection of his glasses. The weak plea echoed, a weeping whisper, 'Why don't you just leave me alone?"

Then the rabbit had seen an opening from the trap, and by instinct had moved forward, but to no avail. Slapping against the wall an arm had come down and startled her from another step. Then the volcanic voice had commanded down to her, "Are you going to do this again?" She had felt her whole self turning into a burning white coal. The room became a box. She had smelled the stale toothpaste on his breath; it whooshed by so hard it had made her face chap.

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The wooden floor had looked like ugly yellow glass. Her breathing was quick and soft; it was drowned out by his angry exhales. At last, his loud chorus of negatives lapsed into a murmur of frowns. Then she was by herself in the whirling den. Her body had not felt disjointed, nor had her head pounded, nor had any splash escaped from her eyes. If they had, it would have become a typical file in a psychiatrist's cabinet, a cliché.

It was strange. That bad symphony kept repeating in her head. She felt as if she ought to do something other than sit on her bed, staring at nothing. It looked too much like a scene from a special on the Family Channel. Next he might storm out of the house. She would not cry. That was no occasion. She scanned for her engraved silver cup, half-empty of its water. She was sucking in too much air.

When he marched past her door, through the chilly hall, and started up the grumpy engine outside, her thoughts rushed down on her. Each resentment, every confusion, all the disgust got a tear and then a few more sprang up for those unnamed feelings. She was finding it easier to breathe with her face in the pillows. It was dark enough in there for her to concentrate on only one thing at a time. Silly, silly girl. The president had not just died; it was not ethnic cleansing; Ginger had not been struck down by a speeding car. It was a simple concept: she did not deserve a good cry.

She believed all these things at seventeen. Friendship and even love could disintegrate in the captured mind of an unhappy person. This fight did not belong side by side with despair. If she wanted to she could read about its weary tale in some true-to-life magazine article. So she sat up again, flipped her pillow, reached over for the light switch, and rested her head on the dry rose petals as she curled up with darkness and her comforter on her bed.

Anna Haritos, II





## Under the Gas

I can't stand the dentist, and don't know anyone who can. Why anyone would want to become the most feared man in America is completely beyond my knowledge and reasoning. However, on a cold, Friday morning, when I should have been taking a Latin test (which I probably would have preferred), I was sitting in a dentist's office waiting to wet 'em.

7:45 A.M. – I'm fifteen minutes early, and the office is deserted. Not a single dentist is present. In fact the whole building is empty with the exception of the receptionist, who after learning I am here to have a cavity filled, gives me the same respect and cordiality as she would to someone with the bubonic plague. Real pleasant. Ahh, but my aching tooth and frayed nerves will definitely be soothed by the barrage of Garth Brooks and Vince Gill tunes blaring over the intercom. Just my luck, I get the one dentist who truly appreciates the beauty of country music.

7:50 A.M. – The dentist arrives, giving me a sunny smile, and proceeds to talk with the receptionist for twenty minutes about a party he attended last night. His irritating lisp really calms my mood. Garth is still singing about losin' his heart somewhere in a bar in Oklahoma. Die, Garth, die!

8:15 A.M. – A stranger enters. A woman in her mid-thirties walks in, greeting both the receptionist and the dentist warmly before sitting down. Sitting across from me she gives me an icy glare that clearly states, "Shouldn't you be in school, punk?" Sweet. So, having received my cue, I return it with a look of my own – "Shouldn't YOU be in your coffin? It's after sunrise." Our friendly interlude thus continues with our own thoughts.

8:25 A.M. – Twenty-five minutes after I should have been placed in the chair, a toothy dental assistant announces that I may go in now. Oh, joy. So I'm strapped into a chair and left for the wolves. Finally a woman who must be on the same drug as Richard Simmons checks my tooth and asks if I'd like THE GAS with my novocaine. THE GAS? Are you kidding? I've never had THE GAS, but I've heard that five minutes under it makes up for the entire dental visit. I am skeptical, but what the hell? It has to be better than the novocaine.

8:45 A.M. – The dentist arrives and scolds me for not having the cavity filled earlier. I'm convinced he made me spend the last forty-five minutes in pain so I would repent for my great sin. I'm mentally stabbing him with his own dental instruments, when something is placed over my nose. Ladies and gentleman, the eagle has landed, and it's party time! "Just relax," Dr. Numbo says quietly, but my mind is far from relaxed.

Duh? Who cares what time it is, where the hell am I? Two voices drone overhead, and I'm vaguely aware of something being stuck into my gums. (Hey, that hurts. Oh well.) Amidst the scents of mint and sterility, nicotine is also mixed, and as high as I am I can still see the irony in a dentist who smokes. Something seems very amusing and I have to fight the urge to giggle. (Duh, pretty colors.) My attention focuses on red blotches on the ceiling, and through my drug-induced haze I wonder if the previous patient's checkup had gotten a little out of hand, hence the blood.

Forty years later – The country station is still blaring, but Garth is no longer irritating, but poetic. How could I have missed the deep underlying message in his painful lyrics? I'm called back to reality by my dentist (who now sounds incredibly like Dick Clark). "My, this is a big hole!" he exclaims. I assume now that he means my cavity but at the time I am thinking of another hole (yeah, but not as big as yours!). Again I have to fight the urge to giggle. "How are you doing? You all right? You're smiling, that's a good sign!" Of course I'm smiling, you mule! I'm lying on the most comfortable bed in the world, listening to the almighty Garth Brooks and imagining the size of your hole! You'd be smiling too! Haven't dentists ever been under THE GAS before? Fools! A word to all dentists, don't ever try to hold a conversation with a patient under THE GAS, or you'll only get a lot of "Huh?" responses, or answers that sound amazingly like latter-year Beatles songs. (Doc, I live on a yellow submarine and Dr. Pepper's my landlord.)

Sometime during Grenada – THE GAS is suddenly ripped from my nose (mommy?). "All done!" my dentist says cheerfully, and I'm pushed off the chair, aware only of my numb mouth, swirling mind, and that same damn irritating Garth Brooks song. It has lasted for over two hours. "Please make an appointment for your next cleaning. I recommend six months from now," he advises. Six months?! No way! "I'll be back tomorrow," I say groggily, "so keep THE GAS ready, 'kay Sylvia?" I leave the office and the hysterical laughter of Dr. Numbo.



## Royal Putty

You walk through the halls, head high, stopping to talk, no worries  
You walk as if you own the world, and you do.

You've gotten everything you've ever wanted  
But you're no queen,

You never deserved a crown,  
Because you're nothing but a child  
when it comes to real life.

You wanted cool friends, you got them.

You want a true friend, well, you had her.

But you can't mold her into your picture-perfect world  
the way you molded and changed yourself,  
because she won't let herself fit.

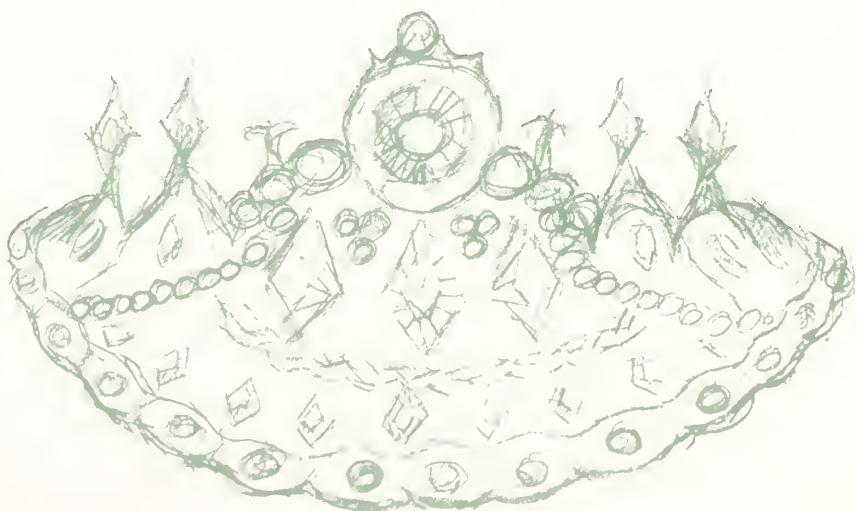
I'm not silly nor putty, but

a person who doesn't fit into a picture image to be accepted.

You walk through the halls, head high, stopping to talk, no worries.

Be careful, you may trip and lose your crown.

*Sarah Colvario, III*





## DreamScape

Past.

I see Red

The color of the Red Sox uniform  
for Mission Hill Little League.

I am an Indian.

Yellow.

I stand there, waiting, wet sand and fertilizer  
bombarding my nose, holding  
a metal bat far too big for me above the  
base with my small  
brown hands.

Present.

I see Yellow.

The color of a school bus.

Psychologists register it as a  
Panic color.

I panic because

I'm waiting for something, someone,  
Anyone.

I have neither goals nor expectations  
and this breaks my often  
relaxed

state. I feel like I should know  
what I want, but all

I know is ...

Future.

I see White.

Clean.

Sterile almost.

For a moment, I think I'm in  
a hospital,  
but I'm just in a room.

Empty.

Asylum maybe.

From what?

I don't know, but there is  
nothing.

No windows, doors.

Just four walls, a floor  
and ceiling.

Antiseptically Clean.

# 英 文 English Left and Chinese Right 中 文

It is not easy being Chinese-American, and even worse if you speak Chinese at home and English at school as I do myself. Never mind the endless list of cultural differences among which I have learned to fluctuate for the appropriate settings. I have also learned long ago to accept stereotypes, which once were most bothersome to me. However, it is the conflicting differences between the English and Chinese languages that trouble me most.

There are the obvious differences: word structure, for example. English words are constructed by stringing together any combination of 26 letters to any length. The phonetic distinctions among these 26 letters supply the pronunciation of each word. Most words are polysyllabic. English is written and subsequently read in rows from left to right, from top to bottom. A Chinese character, on the other hand, is composed by an arrangement of proper strokes and dots inside an imaginary square. The lack of a phonetic alphabet restricts Chinese characters from being phonetically spelled out; every word must be memorized as it is. All characters are monosyllabic. Chinese is written and read, conversely, in columns from top to bottom, right to left.

The esoteric differences between these two languages lie in their grammar. Perhaps what sets the grammar of these languages apart is not the lack of tense form in Chinese verbs or plural form in Chinese nouns, but rather that English, as with most Indo-European languages, expresses time and number through the use of inflectional endings, while Chinese uses measure words, time words, and strict word order. In English, we would say, "He sold apples to me." A Chinese grocery shopper, with the same thought in mind but obviously poor English grammar, would say, "He sell apple to I." To specify past tense, the shopper might state the time of the actions (e.g. yesterday) and to signify the plurality, he might use adjectives (e.g. some, many, three): "He yesterday sell three apple to I."

Many times I have been in Chinatown and heard the grocer shout with his distinguishable accent, "Fish very fresh!" Then I would look around and see an American shopper first puzzle over the meaning and then wonder at the missing linking verb. Any good English grammarian would say that a sentence consists of at least a subject and a predicate. However, Chinese grammar permits the omission of a linking verb, provided that a complement follows the subject. It is grammatically correct in Chinese to say, "Tomatoes too green."

The word order of a Chinese sentence is very different from that of an English sentence, even though the sentences may be synonymous in meaning. In specifying an event, a place, a date, the Chinese like to go from most general to most specific. If you were to give your address in Chinese, you would say first the state, then the city, then your street and finally, the number on your door. In English, it is the other way around, starting with the door number and finally ending with the state! If someone were to ask for today's date in Chinese, the responder would first tell him the year (usually unnecessary), then the month, and finally the day. In English, the month would be given first, followed by the day and then the year. In Chinese, if you were to arrange a meeting, you would tell your friends, for example, to meet you in school, in the cafeteria, on the third bench, and you would say so only in this order. In English, you might say, "Please meet me on the third bench in the cafeteria of our school."

Then there are the differences in meaning of idiomatic expressions. Some phrases in Chinese, when translated literally, are senseless in English. Once talking to an English teacher in grade school, I was told that my classmate seems very polite. I told her that he was just "polishing her shoes." "To polish shoes" is a term in Chinese equivalent to the English "kiss up." That Chinese term, adopted at home, crossed my mind and I innocently translated it word for word. After my remark, the teacher evidently thought it literally because she called my parents that night and told them to get my eyes checked.

I can never seem to communicate in Chinese at home without applying some English grammar structure or vice versa in school. And, everyday, my problem grows as my vocabulary builds and I learn new idiomatic expressions both in English and in Chinese. But that's all right; being bilingual is its own reward.



## George

For as long as he could remember the world had been plotting against him. It seemed anything George did was destined for failure, and if not complete failure then at least some demise that always seemed so planned. As he drove along to school, he seemed to fit perfectly into a puzzle, created by everyone else. He turned his blinker on to make a lane change, and as the fellow driver waved him in, George detected an understanding, a completeness of knowledge about him from the smiling woman. It felt as though she was awaiting that move and knew it would come, just as George thought to hit the blinker.

He had a lot of friends. "Hey George," "Georgie, what's up man?," and "Good paper, George" seemed to come with regularity. Each time the speaker seemed to say their hello from memory, acting beautifully, as though it was a natural thing. All the greetings were timed so perfectly, it always left him feeling curious.

"God, I wonder if that wasn't planned!" George thought to himself. Upon rationalizing the whole thing, he figured that to be a little too much paranoia on his part.

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Above George, somewhere in his school, there were several computers at work, preparing. Data was being processed at incredible speeds, being sent to many different areas that had to prepare for George.

"Julee, I want you down there, walking past 103, quite unexpectedly for him, that would be perfect; Sarah, when you're at your locker, and he walks by you, don't really acknowledge him. That will be perfect for the emotional track of his day, as is written in the orders from headquarters, compiled this morning."

The district supervisor commanded these to those assembled in his office. Anyone George came across in school was prepared for him today; anything he would say, they would be prepared with an amount of conversation to engage in with him. What is confusing is, why would everyone follow these orders? Well, the people of the world had never lived free of their duty to affect the life of George, as they were told. No one was sure when it was decided that everything would revolve around George, and even the leaders had really forgotten.

No one remembered when technology came to be used for this purpose. Truly, no one understood why they had to follow the commands. Nobody knew any of the facts about the overall plan for George, and everything was taken for granted. It was a worldwide organization that planned, prepared, and executed George's destiny. Above all, the thoughts would have to be kept away from George's suspicion.

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Saying bye to Julee, he hurried along to class. He felt good, having quite unexpectedly ran into her around 103. Passing Sarah, his good friend, she barely acknowledged him, and probably didn't even nod a hello or anything at all. George thought, "Why didn't she say hi to me, she always does," and he smirked in the confusion of the moment, and upstairs the supervisor smiled.

At the close of school he went to work, and the first annoying customer came into his line. She seemed doomed to make George's life hellish, and questioned him frantically, about any price he rang into the register. A little later, Jana, also a cashier, stopped by him and said, "Hey George, after work could you drive me home?" George couldn't wait to drive her home, for he had had a crush on her for so long. He thought to himself, "finally, that charm starting to work for me!"

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The manager commended Jana on her fine performance earlier, "Good job on that, really realistic!"

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George left Jana at her front door, and drove home. "Hey you stupid piece of -," as a woman swerved in front of him on the highway, dangerously close to his fender. As he walked into his living room, his parents complained of his history test. He thought he had done well, but it seemed to have been manipulated in some way against him . . . George had to stop thinking like that, it seemed so foolish.

About to fall asleep, he thought of how life seemed spiraling out of anyone's control, beyond his reach.

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The computers whirred and beeped, preparing statistics, reviewing the outline for George's next day. "Okay, let's go with some nightmares, let's get the blood and adrenaline flowing, quick!" All around the nation the news was made, world events were being arranged for George's day. Strategies were composed: "Then you say, 'I don't want to today, thanks' and then . . ." And thus all the peoples of the world were making ready for another day with George, memorizing his fate and playing it out perfectly.

## Cancer

I stood there. Waiting. Wanting to wake up from this as if it were a bad dream. I knew the people standing near me, but I did not speak to them. Their faces were streaked with salty tears that pooled from their eyes, rolled down their pale faces over their cheeks, and dropped onto their collars leaving tiny wet specks. The air, heavy and uncomfortable, would soon be filled with the scent of incense, not the sweet fragrance of incense which you burn in your room, but the dark, heavy scent which you wish never to encounter. More people came and began to wait just as I had been waiting. Waiting anxiously, nervously, and with tears in their eyes.

It was hot, and the bright August sun made tiny rainbows on the dark church walls as its rays streamed through the stained glass windows. The front of the altar, where the casket would soon be placed, was decorated with many floral arrangements, most of which contained long pure white lilies. The flowers added a bittersweet fragrance to the air, but few people seemed to notice.

Music bellowed from the organ. This deep groan lingered as family and friends trudged down the center aisle to the pews at the front of the church. They wore black. Some carried long-stemmed thorned roses in their hands. Others carried boxes of tissues which would not go unused. She walked, crippled as if she had forgotten her cane, and sat down in the first pew. Her face was cold and expressionless. I was amazed by her composure. I wondered how she hid it, contained it. That grief, that pain.

Then the scent of incense grew heavy. The faint mist encircled her and her composure crumbled like ancient city walls, leaving her alone and vulnerable. I watched as she toppled over in anguished pain. Her outstretched arm shook as she reached for the casket, but she was held back by her father. Her mother lay only a few feet away, but she could no longer touch her.

Her emotions were like a stack of papers accidentally scattered on a windy day. Quickly she was on her hands and knees, frantically trying to collect them. She did. She sat up straight and rolled her shoulders back and focused her attention on the priest and not the casket. She remained composed for some time, but then the gusts of winds returned and her emotions scattered like a stack of papers. Only this time her frantic efforts at composure were futile. She felt the pain, the grief and it surpassed her.

The procession down the aisle began once again. The organ pipes let the familiar notes of "Amazing Grace" drift through the air. With their roses held limply in one hand and empty tissue boxes in the other, friends and family slowly filed out and tried to mouth the words to the hymn. Their lips quivered with every syllable. Some had stopped their efforts to mime the words and instead bowed their heads, hoping to hide their pain from the people still standing in the pews.

Supported by the arms of her father, she made her way to the church doors. Her face was no longer cold and expressionless but pulsating red and covered with the windy trails of her tears. As she limped by each pew, she stared straight ahead as if no one were present. She clutched her father's blue suit jacket just as an old lady clutches her purse close to her side while walking in the city at night. The doors were now footsteps away and as she staggered over the threshold, her arm brushed against the brown mahogany frame of the doorway.

Slowly, with bowed heads, the remaining mourners filed from their pews to the church doors. I walked with this silent solemn stream of mourners. As I got closer to the church doors, the bright summer sun produced a razor sharp glare. I put on my sunglasses and continued to walk forward, wiping tears from my eyes, my head held high and my heart set on the future.





## A Natural Affair

The sand spirits are racing down the beach, racing through the dunes, racing to the water. Somehow their presence is appropriate. They're only half in my world, so they're not really trespassing. I don't mind them – except when the wind changes directions and they come whipping ...

Ouch! Stop that! It stings.

Sorry I yelled – go on. Do what you will. They race to the water and vanish. But soon I feel a chilly slither up my leg.

You naughty boy!

Wind has always been a sly one, taking me from behind. The seducer. He winds up my arm and traces a whisper on the back of my neck.

*Come play. Do you remember the fun we had?*

I remember ...

*Come play.*

He tugs my skirt, my will, and I feel the chill of the ice water draw near. The water yawns and folds over on itself.

*I have many secrets for you.*

I know.

*Come play.*

I can't. Not today.

He caresses my face once more and wipes away a few wisps of hair.

*Suit yourself.*

A piece of my spirit yanks away and rambles with the wind. Rambles and does not look back.

I should be there, too.

The sand spirits stir again. It's the doing of Wind. They race and whip once more, and my feet disappear in a mist of salt. I trace my outline. I will come back to play. Someday. Someday when I'm the shadow of a spirit, too.

*Maria Dubrowski, I*

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*the register, winter 1997*

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